

Testimony in support of: HB 6633 Co-chairs and member of the committee,

My name is Catherine Benner. I live in West Hartford and am a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance.

To Chairs Moore and Luxenberg, and the members of the Housing Committee

I am writing to convey my strong support in support of Fair Share Legislation, **House Bill 6633**

Connecticut towns have a long history of racist and exclusionary zoning practices. Whether to permit as a legal matter and to allow development of housing that would accommodate residents and families who are of limited means usually means whether to encourage racial and ethnic diversity in the town. Towns, which under existing Connecticut law, have autonomy in creating their zoning laws and housing policies, all too often make decisions which have led to Connecticut being one of the most racially segregated states in the country.

The “not in my backyard” mentality is pervasive—largely because the lack of real time experience with the availability and proximity of affordable housing has inflamed concerns among town residents that more inclusive zoning laws will “destroy” the town—which is simply not true.

Instead, his bill will make our suburbs more inclusive places to live and contribute to economic growth and revitalization of our cities.

The bill is specifically modeled after successful legislation in New Jersey and informed by Raj Chetty’s research on economic opportunity. Enacting this legislation has the potential to generate over:

- 135,000 units of sorely needed affordable housing over 10 years
- 63,000-79,000 jobs (full time equivalents sustained for ten years)
- \$9.8-12.2 Billion in state and local tax revenue • \$47-59 Billion in income for Connecticut residents.

My town—West Hartford—has relatively progressive and enlightened affordable housing policies, which have led to a diverse population that enriches the living conditions here. For example, both our kids and grandkids have gone through the West Hartford School System—particularly Wolcott Elementary School, Sedgwick Middle School, and Conard High School—where diversity of the student body is a pronounced advantage to their life experience. Being with groups or teams of kids with various backgrounds and ethnicities and having friends of different races has—simply put from a parent and grandparent perspective—made them better people more well-equipped to handle the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities they will have after graduation. I wish my wife and I had had those experiences and had a more diverse circle of close friends than we do, which would enrich our own lives.

Passing **House Bill 6633** is not only the right thing to do to address Connecticut's affordable housing and housing segregation crises, it is also the smart thing to do to boost our economy overall, creating housing for the jobs we need to grow and flourish. Without this change in the law, the crisis of unavailable affordable housing will continue, and the state's economy will stagnate over the long term. This bill will provide of a set of tools and laws that make sure our zoning and planning systems are fair and equitable.

For all these reasons, I believe strongly in Fair Share Planning and Zoning and urge its passage.